

Committee on Equal Opportunities
Campus Visit
Murray State University
April 22-23, 2008

Adopted by the CEO: June 16, 2008

Purpose and Process: The purpose of a campus visit is to allow the Committee on Equal Opportunities to review institutional activities that support the commitments and objectives of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities*. The committee is charged with monitoring institutional progress toward implementing *The Kentucky Plan and the Partnership Agreement* with the U. S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. Monitoring is completed through data analysis and campus visits.

The CEO visited Murray State University April 22-23, 2008, to meet with campus leaders, students, faculty, and other representatives of the campus and local community. Meetings were designed to give the committee an opportunity to hear from selected members of the educational community about access, choice, affordability, and the effectiveness of related institutional policy. Campus visits are not meant to gather scientific, empirical data, but rather to learn about the success of equal opportunity policy implementation.

Core Focus: The CEO visit begins with identification of the general focus for review and discussion. The committee's goal is to learn about the university's strategies and leadership in implementing the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan* and recommendations from previous campus visits, and, to gain some understanding of how institutional policy has influenced college choice for qualified and motivated students to enroll and to persist to graduation without race being a fundamental determinant of admission or denial.

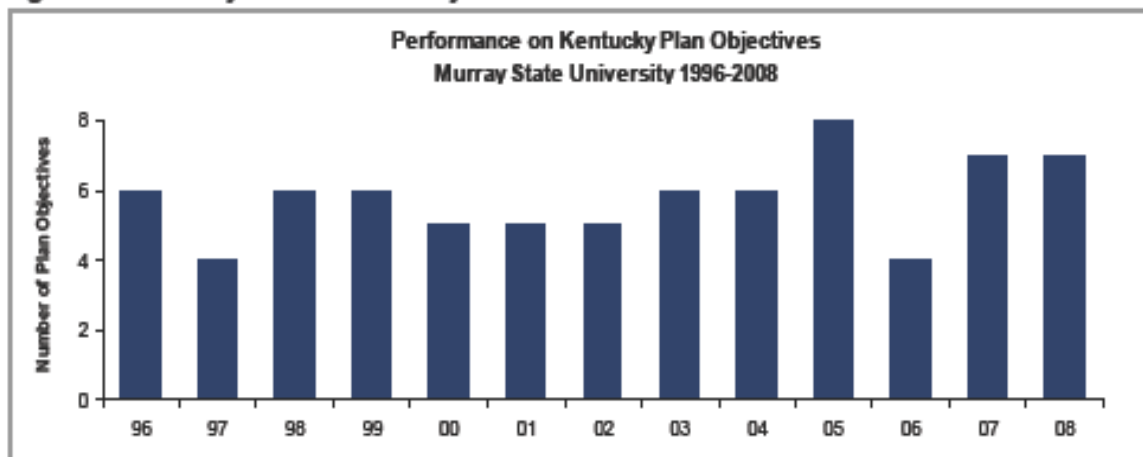
Executive Summary: One of the six comprehensive universities in Kentucky is Murray State University, with academic programs in the core areas of arts and sciences, agriculture, business, health and human services, teacher education, communications, engineering, and applied technologies. The institution places a high premium on academic outreach, collaborative relationships with alumni, public schools, business and industry, governmental agencies and other colleges and universities. The university prepares graduates to function in a culturally diverse, technologically oriented society and emphasizes student-centered learning and educational experiences. Since 1996, MuSU has used a residential college model of the university (patterned after Oxford and Cambridge). The residential college concept promotes the development of student leadership skills, the responsibility of self-governance, the

establishment of traditions, enduring friendships, and lasting bonds. The residence is the heart of each college and is the focal point for college activities. There are eight residential colleges.

MuSU's main campus, located in Murray, Kentucky, is comprised of 74 major buildings and two libraries, and can be accessed from all regions in Kentucky and contiguous states. MuSU has an 18-county service region make up of Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, Trigg, Union, and Webster Counties. The university also serves students through regional campuses in Paducah, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, and Henderson, as well as through distance learning. In fall 2006, MuSU enrolled 10,304 students. The school strives to maintain a strong academic reputation, having been commended in *U.S. News & World Report* for multiple years.

The ability of qualified motivated students to enroll and qualified interested faculty to transition to a particular postsecondary institution is constrained only by choices presented by that institution. During the past 13 years MuSU's overall annual performance on *The Kentucky Plan* objectives shows varying degrees of success as depicted in the chart below.

Figure 10: Murray State University



Source: CPE Comprehensive Database

Dr. Randy Dunn, president of Murray State University, provided opening remarks highlighting the commitment of the university to promote diversity throughout the campus stating that the institution takes very seriously the duty to fulfill the obligations of the KY Plan and to create a culture at MuSU that is welcoming, inclusive, and

promotes, fosters, and nurtures diversity. The president also noted that while MuSU faces a number of challenges, he is proud of its accomplishments.

Dr. Dunn introduced strategic imperatives on the campus that include:

- Creating Excellence
- Promoting Partnerships
- Creating Community
- Promoting Outreach

According to the president, some of the issues that continue to challenge MuSU include student recruitment, student enrollment, and the geographical location of the institution as it relates to students of color, and the employment of African American faculty. Some students of color confront feelings of isolation and lack of acceptance into the larger academic and local community, as well as comfort-level issues; however, the university has been diligent in implementing programs that provide a complement of support services from student affairs, as well as other offices and organizations. Additionally, a full-range of activities is offered to engage students in the larger MuSU family, in particular programs that assist African American students with adjusting to the campus community. The university is getting there; however, it is not there yet.

President Dunn was very complimentary of the assistant director of school relations for African-American recruitment, commending her efforts to recruit African American students from counties with large minority representation. Also the director of African American student services and ethnic programs was credited for services offered to retain African American students through a variety of programs, activities, and retention initiatives including: Academic Skills/Study Table Program, Emerging Scholars Institute, Dr. Marvin D. Mills Multicultural Center, Multicultural Student Roundtable, Multicultural Parents Advisory Council, Black Student Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Special Clubs, Pre-Great Beginnings, Diversity Achievement Awards Reception, African American Heritage Gala, Hitimu Celebration (Fall/Spring Graduation), and Cultural Specific Programming (African American Heritage and Hispanic American Heritage).

Mr. S. G. Carthell stated that his programming focuses on fostering excellence, creating community, and building partnerships. Also, a Multicultural Parents Advisory Council helps to keep parents engaged and informed of the students' progress.

Dr. Dunn stated that a change in programming was beneficial to the institution, as well as the students, when the Office of Minority Student Recruitment became a part of School Relations. He also acknowledged MuSU's strong recruiting efforts in Illinois stating, "About 55-56 African American students from Illinois help to build the

community and change the culture of the campus.” Additionally, President Dunn shared with the CEO that he was perplexed by why the number of African American faculty and staff at MuSU haven’t grown more, given the initiatives the university have put in place. He believes that MuSU must become more aggressive in recruitment efforts to increase the representation of this group. A pool of funds has been developed to address this concern. Enrollment of resident African American students at MuSU (fall 2003 to fall 2006) is depicted in the chart below.

Kentucky Resident African American Undergraduate Enrollments

	F03	F04	F05	F06	Objective
African American	340	301	303	308	----
% of Total	5.9%	5.2%	5.1%	5.2%	6.0%

The university acknowledged that it takes seriously the recommendations from the 2003 campus visit, and the perception of the institution has changed dramatically since the last visit. According to Dr. Dunn, MuSU has worked attentively to build a stronger town and gown relationship. The institution presented the goals of the university to local businesses and informed them of issues students are subjected to on campus and in the local community. Businesses in downtown Murray are collaborating with MuSU to ensure that students feel welcome and included. At the beginning of each fall semester MuSU students are shuttled downtown to meet with members of the local community, participate in festive events, register for raffles/give aways. The president stated that the process has been motivating; however, a developmental relationship such as this needs time to mature. He indicated that the institution is trying to do what is expected, but there has to be a change in the mindset and hearts of individuals for change to occur. Also, at the same time MuSU is attempting to unite international students with the campus and the local community. Dr. Dunn noted that recently he has seen a decrease in African American student enrollment which already has affected the Murray community and anticipates that the impending budget reduction will also have a significant negative impact on the campus and local community.

Ms. Sabrina Dial, Interim Compliance Coordinator, presented information highlighting the progress by the university since the 2003 campus visit. Ms. Dial stated that MuSU has shown steady progress over the last several years, and there has been a clear decision by the president to support diversity initiatives. For example, more than 150 African American faculty, staff, and students have become a part of the educational community. The president continues a tradition of hosting an event for African American faculty and staff at his home and personally participating in other significant events. It was noted that this is the second time in MuSU history that an African American male was honored as the Outstanding Senior Male, and that the student is

the first to hold titles as both the African American Senior Male and Homecoming King. The campus has also sponsored the following initiatives:

- Host of African American Student Leadership and Retention Summit 2005
- Host of Multicultural Student Leadership and Retention Summit 2006
- Douglass Homecoming Reunion
- 50TH Anniversary of Desegregation
- Host of 2008 KABHE 25th Annual Conference
- Addressed the recommendations from the 03 visit
- Host of the 2008 Academically Proficient African American High School Jr/Sr Conference

Ms. Katherine Kerr, Registrar, stated that all students enrolled at MuSU are offered assistance with academic needs. The department assists students with enrollment, evaluates transfer credits, verifies enrollment and degree completion, provides transcripts, provides final grades, forwards student athlete's grades to the NCAA, ensures students are making progress towards their degree, and reports enrollment data to CPE. The registrar's office provides support to groups and organizations on campus. Every effort is made to assist with student retention and graduation initiatives. The office provides reports at the end of the academic semester; however, mid-term reporting is available for students enrolled in select classes, as well as first-time freshmen.

The registrar stated that the office could play a greater role in retention efforts, and the process may become more fluid after the new data system is installed. MuSU administrators believe that providing information online will be beneficial to the students they serve. The new services are expected to be available fall 2009. MuSU's first-year retention of resident African American students (F03/F04 to F06/F07) is displayed in the chart below.

Retention of First-Year Kentucky Resident Students

	F03/F04	F04/F05	F05/F06	F06/F07	Objective
African American	47 of 70 67.1%	28 of 42 66.7%	34 of 49 69.4%	20 of 32 62.5%	65.8%
White	618 of 852 72.5%	646 of 872 74.1%	656 of 889 73.8%	631 of 840 75.1%	65.8%

Dr. Don Robertson, Vice President for Student Affairs, stated that MuSU is focused on student success and graduation. The goal of the institution is for all students to have a positive campus experience. MuSU has had a tolerance policy in place for a number of years. The university also implemented a Student Retention Program that includes The Great Beginning Program and the First-Year Experience Program. Additionally, there are a number of proactive safety nets in place:

- Residential Colleges
- 1ST Year Leader Program
- Student Life Office
- Retention Alert Program
- Ombudsman for the Residential Colleges
- Two (2) Retention Committees
- One (1) 6-Year Graduation Rate Committee

Dr. Robertson stated that there is a strong correlation between attending class and student success. MuSU has also created programs to enable parents and students to become actively involved in the educational process. Various programs and services have been established to encourage both parents and students. Dr. Robertson circulates his business cards to every parent and student, in addition to distributing MuSU magnets with a toll-free phone number. Administrators believe that the more involved parents are the better they are able to address the students' needs.

Mr. Mike Young, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, confirmed that great efforts are made by his office to be accessible to students. According to MuSU administrators, students are viewed on an individual basis, and their personal needs are placed above all else. The individualized focus seemingly addresses retention efforts. Retention initiatives are viewed from several perspectives at MuSU: Racer Advantage Grant, Book Program, and Pay-As-You-Go. Mr. Young indicated that MuSU works collaboratively (faculty, residential college heads, staff, etc.) with students to address concerns and issues and to help resolve them.

Ms. Carmen Garland, Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs in the Office of Student Retention, stated that she provides a variety of services to students, including student athletes. A new system is scheduled to be implemented to unify efforts between the different offices which will promote more effective communication with students. The retention alert status is ongoing and will enable administrators and staff to advise students to drop or add classes accordingly. To implement these strategies, staff meets with students to obtain permission to contact parents/guardians, if necessary. MuSU administrators are sensitive to FERPA requirements and acquire permission before discussions of grades or other information covered by the Act. MuSU attempts to be proactive by conducting focus groups with freshmen and sophomores to learn about services that should be provided to underclassmen. MuSU administrators indicated that, although the institution has a 60 percent graduation rate, they are not content and acknowledged that greater efforts are needed in the student retention area. MuSU's success retaining (F03/F04 to F06/F07) all resident undergraduate African American students is depicted in the chart below.

Retention of all Kentucky Resident Undergraduate Students

	F03/04	F04/F05	F05/F06	F06/F07	Objective
African American	225 of 314 71.7%	195 of 273 71.4%	203 of 272 74.6%	219 of 275 79.6%	77.8%
White	4,048 of 4,885 82.9%	4,019 of 4,969 80.9%	4,205 of 5,059 83.1%	4,388 of 4,996 87.8%	77.8%

In response to the question of “why MuSU students leave before completing the degree,” Dr. Robertson stated that the institution conducts follow-up interviews with all non-returning students to understand the students’ decision to withdraw. The outcome of the AASSEP Office contacts with students, who left before receiving a degree, included financial, academic, military, family issues, and difficulty adjusting to life in Murray. Additionally, Ms. Roslyn White noted that the geographical location of MuSU may influence a student’s decision to not enroll after being admitted by the university. She also believes that African American students prefer an urban setting to a rural environment.

The university focuses its efforts on recruiting African American students from the Louisville and Lexington areas because of the critical mass of African Americans located in both cities. Currently, MuSU employs eight individuals to assist with recruiting efforts. They are not advised to recruit a certain racial or ethnic group. They are, responsible for recruiting all students, although the university indicated that there are specific efforts employed to recruit African American students. Some notable efforts are:

- The Marvin Mills Scholarships
- 30 scholarships that cover:
 - Tuition
 - Housing
 - Meal Plans
 - \$1,000 Scholarship for Juniors/Seniors
 - Lead Team Student Group assists with recruitment

MuSU collaborates and partners with several organizations to develop a rich and potentially rewarding long-term relationship: the Louisville/Lexington YMCA Black Achievers, the Lincoln Foundation, and Governor’s Minority Student College Preparation Program. Other initiatives implemented by MuSU include an African American Honors Day ceremony, development of a new relationship with Bracktown Baptist Church (Lexington, KY), hosting a minister’s lunch at the Murray campus, and offering scholarships to churches for qualified students.

MuSU administrators complimented staff on recruitment efforts and believe that if students can be encouraged to visit the campus they may enroll. In addition to recruiting students from Louisville and Lexington, a special relationship also exists with Paducah, Hopkinsville, and Mayfield. MuSU staff visits several churches in the Paducah area; one church paid ACT registration fees for students in the congregation. MuSU is also paying attention to Kentucky's mega churches, for example, St. Stephens Baptist Church of Louisville.

Minority students are strongly encouraged to apply for all scholarships. Transfer scholarships are offered to students transferring from a community college to MuSU. Minority students receiving diversity scholarships are required to participate in the Diversity Scholars Program (retention). All student scholarship recipients are required to complete five service hours per week. Student financial aid packages are reviewed to ensure sufficiency of funding alternatives. Minority retention scholarships are available to some students that take longer than four years to complete the degree.

All first time students are invited to arrive early on campus to become acclimated to the campus community by participating in pre-Great Beginning. Additionally, African American students are invited to come a day earlier to attend a session design to meet their needs. Students may be admitted to MuSU, without conditions, with completion of the pre-college curriculum, ranking in the top half of graduation class or cumulative GPA of 3.00 or above and ACT composite of 18 or above.

Mr. Carthell stated that African American students have difficulty adjusting to academic and financial responsibilities at MuSU. His department attempts to provide positive experiences for students as they enroll. He noted that retaining students involves the support of the family, including religious connections. Other retention initiatives highlighted by Mr. Carthell include Academic Skills/Study Tables Program, Emerging Scholars Institute, Pre-Great beginnings, Diversity Scholars, Dr. Marvin D. Mills Multicultural Center, Multicultural Student Roundtable, Multicultural Parents Advisory Council, Black Student Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council, and Special Clubs.

MuSU has been successful in achieving many of the eight goals and objectives of *The Kentucky Plan*. For example, MuSU made progress on seven of eight objectives in both the 2006-07 and 2005-06 evaluations, four of eight objectives in the 2004-05 evaluation, and eight of eight objectives in the 2003-04 evaluation. MuSU made steady progress between 2003 and 2008, with the exception of one year. African American resident undergraduate enrollment has slowly increased, retention of first year African American residents has been achieved each year, and retention of all African American residents has been achieved, though it fluctuated between 2003 and 2004 before slightly increasing in 2005.

Unfortunately, greater attention is required to address two challenges: the six year graduation rate and the enrollment of African Americans in graduate education. Between 2004 and 2006, only 40 to 48.3 percent of African American residents completed their degree. The representation of African American residents in graduate programs dropped from 2003 to 2004, before increasing slightly in 2005 and 2006. The MuSU six-year graduation rate and enrollment in graduate programs for resident African Americans is provided below.

MuSU offers student support services, as well as a variety of student retention initiatives, for both majority and minority students. According to administrators, the university offers student advising services that have been very beneficial and anticipates that services will be enhanced once a new data system has been installed.

Six-Year Graduation Rate for Degree-Seeking Kentucky Residents – Fall 2001 Cohort

	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Objective
African American	11 of 22 50.0 %	6 of 15 40.0%	10 of 24 41.7%	14 of 29 48.3 %	48.7%
White	380 of 587 64.7%	310 of 532 58.3%	331 of 531 62.3%	436 of 786 55.5%	48.7%

Kentucky Resident Graduate Student Enrollments

	F03	F04	F05	F06	Objective
African American	72	86	64	67	---
Total (AA+W)	1,244	1,283	1,226	1,260	---
% A American	5.8%	6.7%	5.2%	5.3%	4.7%

In the employment sector, the number of African American executives, administrators, and managers remained at six, with the exception of 2004 when the number decreased by one. The percentage of African American faculty increased between 2003 and 2006. The number remained at 15 in 2003 and 2004, before decreasing by one in 2005 (14), and increasing by two in 2006 (16). Finally, there was a steady increase in African American professional staff between 2003 (17 African Americans) and 2006 (23 African Americans). When compared to other objectives, the greatest rate of growth over the years for African Americans has been among professional staff. MuSU performance on these objectives is depicted in the charts below.

Employment of African-Americans as Executive, Administrative, and Managerial Staff

	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Objective
African American	6	5	6	6	---
Total (AA+W)	52	52	55	60	---
% A American	11.5%	9.6%	10.9%	10.0%	6.0%

Employment of African Americans as Faculty

	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Objective
African American	15	15	14	16	---
Total (AA+W)	396	382	372	377	---
% A American	3.8%	3.9%	3.8%	4.2%	5.0%

Employment of African Americans as Other Professionals

	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	Objective
African American	17	20	24	23	---
Total (AA+W)	227	233	248	255	---
% A American	7.5%	8.6%	9.7%	9.0%	6.0%

Key Finding

The variety of initiatives and programs identified to attract African American and other ethnic minority students to MuSU show promise and may have the effect of increasing the level of support across the campus community. The strength of the approaches will be MuSU's willingness to continually assess program impact and to test whether the paths to educational access are visibly open and, if not, to make changes. The level of performance by MuSU has improved since the last campus visit, though some challenges still exist.

Recommendations from the CEO

General observation: The chief executive officer should strongly encourage the cabinet to regularly engage students, faculty, and staff in conversations to discern issues of high priority that should be on the agenda of the president for purposes of policy development.

Admissions, Advising, and Diversity Initiatives

1. The university needs to ensure consistent implementation of the Emerging Scholars Program and Institute. Eight-ten incoming freshmen are assigned to a mentor; however, some mentors have regular contact with freshmen students, while others do not. More encouragement and oversight is needed for this program.
2. The institution should make greater use of detailed retention data, by department and college, to strengthen programs and strategies to increase retention.
3. The university should consider linking several key programs/services (degree audit, faculty advising, and retention) into the MAP reports to better inform students of their status toward fulfilling the requirements for graduation. The university should consider establishing a formal process to notify students of their status.

Communications

1. The university should clearly communicate the significance of each institutional department regarding their involvement with increasing diversity. Some departments did not appear to believe they had a role in promoting diversity.
2. The university should strongly encourage student government to allow more involvement by African American students in the selection of campus-wide activities, particularly concerts.
3. A general concern was expressed that those required to enroll in developmental education courses are often subjected to ridicule. The university should communicate the benefit and value of academic support.

Advancement and Upward Mobility

The focus group discussions suggest that there are several key questions to consider in future policy discussions of representation of ethnic minorities.

- Why are certain ethnic groups not as likely to apply for or receive offers for positions? (Are these groups perceiving the choice, are there barriers to choice, and are monetary issues important or the sole influence?)
- How should or can choice be redefined to encourage greater participation by minorities in the professoriate at MuSU? (Enabling of options for minorities to apply for, be considered, and be offered an opportunity to be employed at MuSU in greater numbers.)
- What is the likely consequence of offering more or less choice to prospective minority applicants for faculty or professional positions? (Given that over time the structure of postsecondary education and institutions shifts in response to competitive pressures, how should policy shift to accommodate the achievement of certain objectives? Choice may have eroded even without significant changes.)

1. The committee strongly encourages the university to develop innovative strategies to increase the representation of African Americans at the highest level of policy development, particularly since such positions rarely become available.
2. The committee strongly encourages the president and provost to hold deans and chairs accountable for achieving diversity during the formal evaluation. This approach may help departments and colleges to view diversity as a priority.

Student Issues

1. The university should expand its efforts to bring greater levels of diversity to the faculty. African American undergraduate and graduate students were concerned that very few (none in some instances) African American faculty are employed by colleges and departments.
2. Students would like to see more diversity in the SGA and greater involvement of ethnic minorities in selecting activities and programming.
3. Some students claim that support services for minority students are limited. The committee believes this perception results from communication deficiencies and strongly encourages the university to inventory and clearly communicate to all incoming freshmen and transfer students information regarding academic support services, organizations, contact names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and faculty and staff office locations.
4. Students suggested that the president should make it a point to attend more student events. Students indicated that they would like to see the president attend more diversity events. According to members of the focus group, appearances by the president would indicate that diversity shares a high priority at MuSU.

Recommendations or Concerns to the CEO

1. The CEO should encourage universities to explore initiatives linked to town and gown and the success of partnerships within the university community.
2. The CEO should modify its campus visit format to require institutions, to the extent possible, to invite more African Americans and minority graduate students to participate in the focus group discussions, invite participants in prior visits to participate in future visit focus group discussions, and allow more time for the student and faculty/staff sessions.

Discussions with Constituent and Focus Groups

President and Leadership Team: The highest priority of *The Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities* and *The Partnership Agreement* with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights is to create campus and community environments that support and encourage diversity among students, faculty, and staff.

President Randy Dunn and MuSU administrators provided introductory remarks that highlighted the institution's commitment to diversity. Dr. Dunn made a personal declaration of his responsibility as the CEO and leader of MuSU in fulfilling the goals and objectives of *The Kentucky Plan*. Opening remarks focused on MuSU's strategic imperatives, the capital campaign, comprehensive services and activities, and challenges that the university confronts.

The presentation noted collaborations with educational institutions and organizations and highlighted programs and strategies implemented to meet the objectives of *The Kentucky Plan* and *The Partnership Agreement*. Dr. Dunn praised various individuals, as well as the Murray community, for working collaboratively on behalf of the students. For example, although student recruiting has been challenging, Ms. Roslyn White was commended for her efforts to assist with increasing the representation of African American students at MuSU. Similarly, President Dunn applauded the local community for helping to unite the educational community with the local community. Although the institution noted a decrease in African American student enrollment, which impacts the community, Dr. Dunn stated that the town and gown relationship has helped to address issues of inclusiveness.

Murray State University serves students through regional campuses in Paducah, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, and Henderson, as well as through distance learning programs. According to MuSU administrators, the service area includes an 18 county service region: Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, Trigg, Union, and Webster Counties. The African American population on which MuSU relies for its enrollments is fairly limited, for example, the population of Ballard County is 2.8 percent African American, Caldwell County is 4.8 percent, Calloway County is 3.5 percent, Carlisle County 0.95 percent, Christian County 23.7 percent, Crittenden County 0.65 percent, Fulton County 23.1 percent, Graves County 4.4 percent, Henderson County 7.1 percent, Hickman County 9.9 percent, Hopkins County 6.2 percent, Livingston County 0.14 percent, Lyon County 6.72 percent, Marshall County 0.12 percent, McCracken County 10.8 percent, Trigg County 9.7 percent, Union County 12.8 percent, and Webster County 4.6 percent African American. This limited availability is reflected by the representation of African Americans among the institution's enrollment.

Dr. Dunn stated that he was distressed by the modest representation of African American faculty on campus, and that the institution must become more aggressive in their efforts. MuSU made special arrangements to provide a pool of funding to address this issue. It was acknowledged that the university must continue to work diligently to address the underrepresentation of African Americans and other minorities.

Ms. Sabrina Dial, Interim Compliance Coordinator, affirmed the institution's commitment to diversity and acknowledged the progress made. She also highlighted achievements and honors in which African American students were recognized. In addition, Ms. Dial recognized other individuals, groups, and departments and their role in assisting with diversity initiatives and strategies.

Key Finding: The president concluded his remarks by identifying some of the challenges that the institution confronts and commented on the intent of the institution to continue to work diligently to address them. Some of the challenges identified include the geographical location of MuSU in regard to student recruitment, building an educational community that enables minority students to own a certain level of acceptance and comfort when they enroll, and the dearth of African American faculty.

Student Focus Group: The CEO engaged in discussions with a mid-sized student group comprised of 16 students, including 11 African Americans, one Latino, and several international students (a majority of the members in the group were student leaders). The students indicated that they received an invitation, both verbally by e-mail, to attend the session (they did not believe an invitation had been extended to all students).

Students were very complimentary of the vice president for student affairs and stated that he goes out of his way to interface and provide assistance to minority students. Students agreed that they have seen an increase in diversity on campus.

Students also stated that they were not pleased with the performance of the SGA and believe that the organization is not sufficiently diverse, slanted programming to the majority group, and is not adequately inclusive of ethnic and racial groups.

One international student stated that they felt overlooked and explained that preferential treatment had been suggested by one faculty member because of the international students' language differences. The student was displeased that the faculty member suggested providing special accommodations for them and concluded that international students are not encouraged or challenged to excel when preferential treatment is given. The international student was also concerned about the hostile environment that could potentially be created as result of being treated differently. Another international student indicated that less was expected of them academically because they are international students.

Several students observed that although Multicultural Student Services and the SGA are housed in close proximity, many students feel uncomfortable and unwelcome visiting the SGA office. The BSC, RCA and SGA meet with Dr. Don Robertson regularly to discuss and address student concerns. However, mediation of conflict by student affairs many times is ineffective. The vice president was praised for attending Black Student Council meetings, minority events, and simply listening to student concerns and problems. Students indicated that African American groups and organizations meet on a regular basis, but are concerned that issues raised by the group have yet to be addressed. Students indicated that the lack of action leads them to conclude that their concerns are not taken seriously.

Focus group members acknowledged that African American faculty and staff has been more involved with African American students; however, they seldom attend minority events. One student praised the career affairs office for offering a friendly environment. Several students indicated that the majority of the student focus group members were in leadership positions, and that those who do not serve as leaders are unfamiliar with the services provided by the university and do not know where to go for assistance. For example, the Emerging Scholars Institute was implemented to provide incoming freshmen with mentors to assist students in navigating the MuSU community. Some students made contact with freshmen mentees, while others did not. The program appears to require more oversight to effectively assist incoming students that often require special guidance, structure, and support.

African American students observed that many of them build close relationships while at MuSU, especially with the limited interactions in the local Murray community. Several stated that they would welcome the international students to unite with them, though their backgrounds and traditions are different. One male student stated that many international students are fearful of African American students and that he hoped they would change their perception of minority groups.

Students identified concerns and challenges they confront at MuSU and in the local community. One student suggested that African Americans have difficulty securing internships in Murray. For example, career services arranged an internship for one African American student; however, the shops in downtown Murray did not allow the student to intern. The student was forced to intern in a city outside of Murray.

Key Finding: Students believe their experiences at MuSU have been positive, but suggested that they would like to see a more diverse student body, as well as faculty representation. It was also noted that the SGA should make a greater effort to include diverse student groups.

Recruitment/Retention/Registrar/Support Programs Focus Groups: Fourteen staff attended the focus group session. What is the CEO's interest? At the broadest, most abstract level, the concept of access, equity, and college choice involves a student's ability to attend the college or university most suited to her desires and academic abilities. Choice is the end result of a process in which students evaluate their options and choose among them. The session focuses on what kind of choice and access is being provided students how effective the institution's policy in encouraging choice for ethnic minority students. The focus group included recruitment, admission, and financial aid staff responsible for assisting students with the enrollment process.

MuSU administrators indicated that they are taking a comprehensive approach in recruiting all students. The typical student at MuSU is admitted with a 3.0 GPA and scored at least an 18 on the ACT. By comparison the typical African American student has a 2.75-3.0 GPA and scored 17-18 on the ACT. MuSU is concentrating on recruiting African American students from Louisville /Jefferson County, Lexington/Fayette County, Paducah/McCracken County, and Hopkinsville/Christian County.

Occasionally, the university is presented with an opportunity to better market the institution's academic strengths by providing transportation to various high schools and arrange for students to visit the MuSU campus. The university targets and recruits all students, those that meet the university qualifications as well as those that are academically challenged. Other resources available to assist the university with recruitments are alumni, networking at conferences, recruitment materials, e-mail, telephone, visits to high schools, and word of mouth.

Members of the focus group explained that MuSU initiated a town and gown relationship to encourage collaboration between the university and the local community as a diversity support strategy. Focus group members agreed that greater interactions between students, faculty, and staff and the local community have resulted from the efforts of the university.

MuSU has developed a number of special initiatives under the leadership of Mr. S. G. Cartell to assist with retention, town and gown efforts, student programming, and advising. These initiatives have made progress connecting the campus with the local community. MuSU, through the unit, initiated the Diversity Awards Reception to recognize the contributions of African American students, organizations, and community leaders. Other successful initiatives and activities were cited as having been implemented successfully by the special unit.

Admissions office staff stated that the office interacts with students regularly to provide information, for example, student housing/residential colleges, financial aid, special services, and support services. To illustrate the type of services offered, one focus

group member confirmed that all undeclared majors are required to visit the advising center and, as students identify a major, they are paired with an advisor. The discussion intimated that student advising training is not consistent university-wide but should be. Participants believe that more success can be realized with student retention if more resources are made available by the university. The general consensus was that the most significant issues for African American student retention are financial problems, family concerns, limited academic preparation, and military enlistment.

Key Finding: The general consensus was that more collaboration and strategic planning is needed between various constituents at MuSU to support the recruitment, admission, retention, and graduation of all students, particularly African Americans. All segments of the university should clearly understand their role in retention strategies. The general perception is that the AASSEP office is responsible for retention of African American students but that very few resources are available to accomplish the task.

Graduate Programs, Bucks for Brains, and Other Programs: Murray State University offers a variety of graduate and research programs. Several programs have nationwide appeal, for example, the Arthur J. Bauerenfeind Endowed Chair in Investment Management and the student internship program with Security Benefit, a nationally recognized leader in financial services. Fourteen persons participated in the focus group. The group discussed recruitment and retention of African American faculty, staff and graduate students; the campus climate; and the culture of the educational community. According to MuSU administrators, 90 percent of the faculty is full-time, 80 percent are in tenure track positions, and all faculty are required to hold a terminal degree.

A number of participants indicated that they work closely with the Department of Equal Opportunity and engage in an extended process to ensure that minorities are included in applicant pools, invitations for interview, and opportunities for employment. The primary resources for identification of potential candidates are advertising in the traditional media (Chronicle of Higher Education, Diverse Issues in Higher Education), contacts at conferences, and the SREB Doctoral Scholars Institute on Teaching and Mentoring). Other resources are utilized as well.

MuSU administrators indicated that the university has also used alternative strategies such as grow-your-own programs, but those measures do not produce immediate results. For example, of persons in the MuSU grow-your-own program, four individuals have completed their degree while two stopped out. MuSU also annually supports 10 minority graduate fellowships, open to students in any graduate field at the university. Currently participation is steady, and funds are available to support enrollment in graduate education.

The federally funded McNair program is another resource Kentucky has two programs at Eastern Kentucky University and Murray State University. Forty-five students participate in the program at MuSU. This program supports educational opportunities for various racial and ethnic groups: one participant was Native American, while some were African American. The program is open to Kentucky residents and nonresidents.

Administrators from the School of Education discussed the potential of the MuSU Minority Principal and Superintendent Program stating that eight African American administrators have participated in the program since 2000. However, none were offered a position in the Murray area. Educational access is available, but the attitudes and willingness to follow through with employment opportunity in the Murray area is limited for African Americans.

Faculty members were very complimentary of students that complete their programs. Many of the MuSU graduates have transitioned from the master's programs to enroll in medical school, and doctoral programs.

Key Finding: The initiatives and activities in this area might benefit from having a cross departmental group to provide leadership for catalyzing the efforts of others, developing new initiatives, and providing focused leadership to the graduate and research program areas to create more diversity and opportunity after programs are completed.

Faculty: The focus group included 17 participants (African American, Caucasian, and other ethnic groups). Eight African Americans participated in the focus group. Focus group members stated that, while it is not their primary role to do so, they actively recruit students for their respective departments. For example, one participant stated, "I am all about the students." In response to an award recently presented, the participant explained, "It's good that they [MuSU] saw me as an African American making a contribution and recognized me for it." The faculty member believes that support is provided through the provost and dean of the department.

The faculty participants believe that allowing students to enroll at MuSU without meeting the minimum requirements poses a problem. This is not unlike the beliefs of faculty at other institutions in Kentucky. They insist that those recruiting the students should have greater responsibility for ensuring that the students receive the services necessary to enable them to be successful and graduate once enrolled. Faculty believes that the process in place for student support is not effective. Some indicated that minority students fall through the cracks faster than majority students because the minority students are unable to locate the required support services as quickly as others. Several expressed surprise to learn that African American students are less than 5 percent of the nearly 500 students in one discipline.

A dialogue regarding the academic deficiencies of incoming students indicated that step one should be to strongly encourage students to quickly address the deficiencies, which should also increase student retention. It was noted that a, readily recognizable, formal retention program has yet to be established by the university. Faculty and staff routinely are criticized by majority and minority members of the academic community when African American students fall through the cracks and withdraw from MuSU. The group expressed frustration with the current process but also intimated that it is unfair to recruit students without providing an effective support system.

As an example, the office of school relations forward the names of students interested in attending MuSU to faculty, with the expectation that a follow up call will be made. This is not an effective means of recruitment/retention because some believe that phone calls should not be made to students with an ACT score less than 18, since those students are destined for failure without appropriate support. One participant stated that the SSLD (Services for Students with Learning Disabilities) is overloaded.

A member of the professional staff noted that the university's attempts to implement grow-your-own programs have limited success. They do not allow all who would like to participate to actually do so and funding to support the program is problematic. Some believe that a wider university effort is needed. There was no acknowledgement by faculty or professional staff that, by their very nature, grow-your-own programs are designed to limit participation to those with credentials and aspirations that match a need of the institution. Thus, not everyone who applies will be selected to participate in the program(s).

Key Finding: The focus group indicated that they believe that MuSU is doing a good job. However, they acknowledge a disconnect among the faculty and professional staff regarding their joint responsibility for student retention and faculty and staff diversity.

Non-Faculty Professional Staff: Professional staff engaged in an open dialogue regarding their experiences at MuSU reflecting on the campus community. Some were very complimentary of MuSU from an individual perspective and their experiences at the department level. One participant stated that they felt welcome and supported; however, their current position did not require them to spend a great deal of time on campus during certain times of the year. Some African Americans expressed frustration because they are frequently approached by members of the MuSU community to provide broad opinions since they are considered the "authority" regarding people of color.

An objective of *The Kentucky Plan* is to increase the number and proportion of African American faculty and professional staff at public postsecondary institutions. The university cites statewide competition, a limited pool of potential candidates, and

internal institutional variables as critical influences on the recruitment and retention of African American faculty and professional staff. Building diversity in these areas remains one of the institution's most difficult challenges. Since coming to MuSU, Dr. Dunn allocated a pool of funding to employ African American faculty; however, only a limited amount has been expended.

When asked to discuss the MuSU Blue Ribbon Task Force, participants voiced concern regarding a lack of communication about the work of the task force. The focus group indicated that they would like to be more informed about what takes place at MuSU, to have the goals and objectives of the task force identified, and to learn about the progress of the group's work. One participant (a member of the Blue Ribbon Task Force) stated that reports were submitted, and a survey was distributed among African American faculty members (but did not elaborate further). The group agreed that a greater effort should be made to provide information to the African American community about the outcomes.

When asked to discuss their interactions with the university leadership, there was not agreement among the participants as to the extent leadership is involved with their specific activities. For example, one focus group member stated that they do not see the president, while another stated that they see the president on a regular basis at events. Another recalled that the president attended two receptions, hosted a reception at his home for national TRIO Day, and invited the professional staff to his home. A focus group member stated that there is uneasiness on campus regarding where African American faculty and professional staff fit within the hierarchy at MuSU.

The focus group discussed the newly created Black Faculty and Staff Association, stating that they hoped to develop a strategic plan to address diversity issues. Participants noted that faculty work closely with students, but have difficulty assisting hostile students. An African American staff member stated that hostile and frustrated students are sent to their office. The staff member explained that students are angry because they are required to enroll in remedial courses before being admitted to credit-bearing courses. The participant was also complimentary of the staff in the office of Student Support Services, and acknowledged that they provide a great deal of assistance to students enrolled in developmental courses. In general the group expressed frustration with the current process but also intimated that it is unfair to recruit students without providing an effective support system.

Key Finding: The institution must provide both symbolic and material resources to encourage and undergird the change process on campus. This means having the appropriate title(s) and being able to work with the reflective power of the president or provost, having a healthy budget to partner with others, seeding initiatives, and influencing behavior through the promise of incentives, support, and reward.